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## The History of the Muscatine North and South Railroad Co

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Thwaites's progressive outlook is apparent in the scenes, moments, and experiences he chose to describe and photograph. As visual documents, the riverscapes always include humans or constructs, ranging from prehistoric sites and traditional culture to modern industrial sites, that illustrate the nation's aquatic heartland. The authors are to be commended for presenting captivating images in their historic context. Those who realize the influence of rivers on national development will surely appreciate this scholarly work.

*The History of the Muscatine North and South Railroad Co.*, by Bill Lindsay and Brent Maxwell. Published by the authors, Burlington, Iowa, 1996. 109 pp. Photographs, maps, tables. \$37.10 cloth, \$18.55 paper.

REVIEWED BY JAMES BERANEK, CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

In an industry known for exuberant dreams, four local businessmen incorporated the Muscatine North & South Railroad Company (MN&S) in 1893 to build "to the city of Chicago . . . and . . . westward to some point on the Missouri river"(1). Because of the effects of the financial panic that began that year, it was not until January 1899 that the MN&S finally opened—not to Lake Michigan or Council Bluffs, but to prosaic Elrick Junction, Iowa, 28.7 miles south of Muscatine.

Using old newspaper articles, photographs, and maps, the authors vividly recount the railroad's Perils-of-Pauline existence, including its beginnings as a feeder for the Iowa Central Railway; its later extension to Burlington; its dismal financial history (five bankruptcies, six receivers, and 24 deficits in 25 years); and the floods, fires, and accidents that plagued it. The authors emphasize the carrier's operations and physical plant as well as its significance to the small towns it served.

Most of the line was abandoned in 1924, and the railroad became a Muscatine-area switching line until it was sold to the Rock Island Railroad in 1947. The last chapter chronicles a search for what little remains of the MN&S today: some trackage in Muscatine, a few visible grades, and the relocated and extensively remodeled Wapello depot (the sole surviving MN&S structure). An excellent removable system map will help railroad archeologists locate often obscure station sites.

This is not a scholarly work: the authors do not cite company records; the book lacks a bibliography and an index; and photo reproduction ranges from acceptable to awful. It is clearly, however, a labor of love, a well-done social history of a briefly important local institution that, like the electric interurban railroads, could not survive the paved road and the automobile.

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